

Trail blazer in modern buildings



Sumathi Court stands a proud first in the revolutionary concept of futuristic constructions

By Silhouette

The entrance is startling enough to stop you dead in your tracks.

It is, indeed, the most striking feature in the five storeyed Sumathi Court down Galle Road, Bambalapitiya.

As the architect Suchith Mohotti Associates told the Sunday Leader, "A building needs an entrance, and the entrance to an office is notoriously insignificant. We have emphasised it as an entrance so no one would mistake it for anything else."

All the same, it was a fairly disappointing revelation that there was not the slightest association with a space ship, which was what we felt on contemplating the shiny, stainless steel columns and the glass door with its unusual stainless steel handles.

Sumathi Court, completed in mid 1991, with the honour of being the first of Colombo's glass-dominated, modern constructions, was initially received more with brickbats than with bouquets. Yet,

now that the effects have sunk in, glass and stainless-steel dominated buildings are the order of the day in Colombo's changing city scape.

Sumathi Court brought about a virtual revolution in the concept of an acceptable office building. The conventional idea of an office building used to be a staid, fairly obvious kind of construction with no frills or fanciful design. In total contrast, Sumathi Court is anything but boring.

The granite flooring which leads to the magnificent entrance, is complemented by a sky-blue timber suspended ceiling. The major portion of the building's exterior comprises glass and aluminium panes. That again would have been monotonous, if not for the architect's ingenuity.

The Directors' offices on the third floor have been done with mirrored glass and the rest of the building, in tinted glass. Mirrored glass, apparently is a great strain on the eyes of road users, specially drivers, as it reflects light. From another point, mirror glass makes the interior cooler.

The window panes are all in bronze aluminium except for the intriguing diversion in the shape of a step ladder which is natural aluminium.

The starkness of the glass, aluminium and cream marble tile is softened by the colour blend of orange fin, red wall and blue pillar, which set off the black of the glass to full effect.

There is a concrete roof on top, with potential to construct two more storeys. At the moment, the roof top is one jumble of dish antennas and other communication satellite quite appropriate and in harmony with the futuristic appearance of the rest of the building.

The sky and clouds reflected across the glass-covered building, give a pleasurable feeling of spaciousness and a closeness to nature, a simple kind of relief in a vast concrete jungle.

Sumathi Court a proud first in the revolutionary concept of futuristic constructions in Colombo, creating a trend that is being carried on today in all earnestness and vigour.

